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WHAT ABOUT MEXICO?

By George H. Brewer

1. HISTORICAL REVIEW.

QUESTION. What can you tell us about early Mexico?

Answer. Many students believe that the early story of Mexico was contemporaneous with Egypt. There is much evidence to confirm that belief. Here we find mighty pyramids, colossal stone statues of grotesque form, ruins of buried cities several square miles in extent, ornaments of fine-beaten gold, hieroglyphics of unknown origin and meaning, and remnants of splendid monuments showing architectural skill scarcely surpassed in modern times. The aboriginal inhabitants, the Mayas, Toltecs and Aztecs, in turn, have left records of an advanced civilization which existed centuries before Columbus discovered America. There were schools, courts of justice, civil codes, laws governing lands, systems of taxation, public highways, libraries and a thousand other indications of a highly developed life.

QUESTION. What became of this early Mexican civilization?

Answer. Hernando Cortez, with a band of about 500 intrepid Spanish adventurers, made sad havoc of Mexico's government and civilization. He waged a war of conquest, despoiling and destroying whatever he found in his path. He determined to make of Mexico a "new Spain," and indeed so it was called. For 300 years (1521-1821) Mexico was ruled by the viceroys sent from Spain. Their rule, with but few exceptions, was cruel and bloody. The Indians were reduced to abject slavery, their lands despoiled, their wealth taken from them, and hundreds of thousands perished by the sword. Associated with the viceroys were Spanish priests and monks, who supplanted the superstitious religion of the Aztecs with an admixture of paganism and Christianity, resulting in a type of religion common to all Latin-America, which more nearly resembles the former than the latter.

QUESTION. When and how did the rule of the viceroys and priests come to an end?

Answer. The Mexicans struck their first blow for independence in 1810. During the following eleven years the struggle continued with varying success. Many of the leaders, like Hidalgo and Morelos, were captured and shot as trouble makers, but "victory perched upon their banners" at last, and in 1821 Mexico threw off the Spanish yoke forever. The first attempts at government were fraught with disaster. From 1821 to 1847 there were no less than twenty-four changes of government, and every one of them brought about by violence. Long years of internal strife and chaos culminated in a war with the United States (1846-1847).

QUESTION. Tell us something about the outcome of that war.

Answer. One outcome of that war was the acquirement by the United States of over 900,000 square miles of Mexican territory. The vast region embracing Texas, New Mexico, part of Colorado, Utah, Arizona and California became United States soil. Incidentally the acquisition of this vast region led to the discovery of gold in California. This fact has powerfully affected the finances of the world. The wonderful and rapid development of the mighty empire acquired by the United States through the Mexican war has promoted Anglo-Saxon supremacy, and the whole cause of Christianity has received a great impulse as a consequence.

QUESTION. Is Mexico a republic, and when did its real progress begin?

Answer. Mexico nominally is a republic. It has a constitution patterned largely after our own. It elects its President, State Governors, National House of Congress and a National Senate. Its present constitution was adopted in 1857, under the leadership of the famous liberal, Benito Juarez (Wáh-ress). He declared that Mexico could not take her proper place among the family of nations until the shackles of Roman Catholic domination were broken from the limbs of the enslaved nation. His cry was "Separation of Church and State." At first his movement gained great headway and was very popular, but the intriguing Jesuits soon found a

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way to block the wheels of progress. Napoleon III, then Emperor of France, influenced by the Pope at Rome, undertook to establish a Mexican Empire. The dream of the Jesuits was to secure a repeal of the reform laws passed under Juarez. To re-establish the rule of the church in Mexican affairs, Maximilian, an Austrian archduke, was chosen to lead the invasion. Napoleon III sent his troops to enforce the demands. The invaders arrived in Mexico with the Pope's blessing in 1864. The intervention lasted three years. Juarez, driven into exile on the northern frontier, was at last encouraged by Abraham Lincoln, our immortal President, who never recognized Maximilian. He then undertook to gather together his shattered forces and begin once more the struggle for freedom and independence of Roman Catholic domination. Secretary Seward warned Napoleon III that French troops must be withdrawn from Mexico. This led to the downfall of Maximilian, who was executed in 1867 at Queretaro.

QUESTION. What more can you tell us about Juarez?

Answer. Benito Juarez was a native of Oaxaca (Wah-hác-ka). He was a full-blooded Zapotecan Indian. He could not speak the Spanish language until after he was fourteen years old. He was possessed of remarkable ability and character. He became a leader in his own State and soon rose to be a general in the army and served his State as Governor. In 1858 he became President of the republic. He it was who led the people in their war against the Roman Catholic hierarchy. He proclaimed religious liberty, and invited Protestantism to begin its propaganda in Mexico. He said shortly before his death in 1872: "The future of my country depends upon the success of Protestant missions." His name is a synonym for all that is high and noble in statesmanship. His name is enrolled with honor in the hearts of all patriotic Mexicans.

QUESTION. Who was Porfirio Diaz?

Answer. He was a Mexican statesman, patriot, leader and President. To him, more than to any other man, Mexico owes her great material advancement during the last three decades. During his term of office he established the country's finances on a sound basis. He opened the mines, built the railroads and, so far as material progress is concerned, he transformed a nation. He encouraged industry and education, and his benevolent rule made possible an independent, self-supporting, self-respecting and intelligent middle class, and that is the hope of any nation. Some criticise him for doing so little for the Indians; others hold him mainly responsible for the perpetuation of the feudal land system; while still others blame his administration for the thousand ills which culminated in the revolution of 1910, the end of which we cannot at this time foresee. Whatever the truth may be concerning these grave charges laid against the administration of Porfirio Diaz, the fact still stands out clear that he ranks among Mexico's great men and deserves a place among the world's ablest statesmen.

2. MATERIAL DEVELOPMENT AND PRESENT TENDENCIES IN GOVERNMENT.

QUESTION. How large is Mexico?

Answer. Mexico covers an area of 767,000 square miles. If this were spread out over the map of the United States it would almost cover everything east of the Mississippi River. Its greatest length is 1,950 miles, its greatest width being 750 miles. At the Isthmus of Tehuantepec it narrows down to a strip of territory less than 100 miles in width from ocean to ocean.

QUESTION. What about the mines in Mexico?

Answer. One-third the world's output of silver comes from Mexico. Even in revolutionary times the annual output of silver is upward of $50,000,000. When peace and security are restored this will be increased by 100 per cent. Mexico is also rich in gold, lead, copper, zinc, quicksilver and many more rare and precious metals.

QUESTION. What other signs of modern progress are to be found in Mexico?

Answer. Mexico, during the last twenty years of the administration of Porfirio Diaz, made more rapid progress in industry, railroad building, docks and warehouses, mining and agriculture than any other country on the face of the globe. Another notable enterprise successfully launched during that period was the drainage canal, from the center of the valley of Mexico, through the rock-ribbed mountains surrounding the valley, one tunnel being over six miles in length, and finally letting the vast waste water flow uninterruptedly toward the Gulf of Mexico. This gigantic project cost $25,000,000 to complete, and required many years of patient toil.

Pulque (póol-kay), the fermented juice of the maguey plant, a terrible intoxicant, and consumed largely by the poor and ignorant, was for a time prohibited by the *de facto* government, but for some reason the prohibition was suddenly removed and the terrible evils of former days were again apparent. In Mexico City over 30,000 persons are arrested each year for intoxication. The daily consumption of pulque in the federal district exceeds 25,000 gallons.

3. THE RELIGIOUS SIDE OF THE MEXICAN PROBLEM.

QUESTION. What do we know about Mexico's earlier religious history?

Answer. The early religion of Mexico was polytheistic idolatry, or the worship of many gods. The Aztecs had over 200 deities, to whom they paid homage. Their images were hideously grotesque, not unlike those found in India and Africa. They built temples, with an altar for human sacrifice. They had convents and monasteries with many ceremonies very similar to those of the Roman Catholic system; indeed, the proselyting priests, who swarmed everywhere during the Spanish conquest, had no difficulty in making converts; for the ignorant Indians simply added to the number of their gods by adopting the new images introduced by Rome.

QUESTION. What is the record of Roman Catholicism in Mexico?

Answer. The whole history of Mexico, from the coming of the Spaniards to the present day, is saturated with intrigues and oppressions practised by Rome. The Spanish inquisition set up in Mexico, presided over by priests and monks, disposed of thousands of heretics and troublesome patriots.

A foolish story of a miraculous apparition of the Virgin Mary to an Indian on a hillside near Mexico City was propagated to deceive the credulous, and to this day the Virgin of Guadaloupe (Wad-a-loó-pee) is venerated by the ignorant Indians as their goddess or patroness.

Ingeniously contrived images, which can shed tears, increase in size, move their limbs, wink their eyes, etc., are set up and a miracle proclaimed, to deceive the faithful and incidentally to reap a financial harvest for the attendant priest. A few years ago the authorities had to intervene and expose a fraud of that kind when a certain image was reported to be shedding tears of blood. It did shed tears of blood all right, but a rubber bag filled with the blood of a freshly killed kid, having two tiny rubber tubes leading to the eyes of the image, upon a slight pressure administered at a distance and from a hidden position, did the trick.

Roman Catholicism in Mexico has been a failure so far as benefiting the masses of Mexicans is concerned. A monk who accompanied the French military forces when they invaded Mexico in 1864 wrote his observations of the church as follows: "Mexican faith is a dead faith. The church here fills no mission of virtue, no mission of mercy, no mission of charity. Virtue cannot exist in its pestiferous atmosphere." This is a Catholic verdict uttered by Abbé Domenech. This is also the verdict of every unprejudiced observer of Mexico.

QUESTION. What is the record of Protestantism in Mexico?

Answer. Protestant missions are comparatively new in Mexico. Its record scarcely covers fifty years, and yet during that time it has had a marked influence on the life and progress of the country. Under its stimulus and through its schools the rate of illiteracy has been brought down from 94 per cent. to about 70 per cent. The morals and education of the Catholic clergy have been elevated. Persecution, which at first caused the death of several martyrs, is gradually subsiding. The new government, which is now in power, recognized the valuable contribution which Protestantism has made to the progress and betterment of Mexico. Some of the members of Mr. Carranza's official family are Protestants. Whatever government comes into power in Mexico will doubtless give due recognition to the new force which is at work, and Protestantism will occupy a prominent place as a powerful factor in making and sustaining peaceful pursuits. There are said to be upward of 100,000 Protestant adherents in Mexico, and without exception they belong to the middle and progressive class.

Some changes are contemplated in Mexico's constitution, but there is one clause which will not be changed, and that clause reads: "The State and the Church are independent of each other. The Congress may not pass laws establishing or prohibiting any religion."

This is in hearty accord with our great Baptist principle of absolute separation of Church and State. To us Mexico's door stands wide open.

4. BAPTIST MISSIONS AND RESPONSIBILITIES IN MEXICO.

QUESTION. What was the first Protestant work to be established in Mexico?

Answer. A Baptist missionary by the name of Rev. Santiago Hickey, of Brownsville, Tex., entered Mexico in 1860, and two years later founded what eventually became the First Baptist Church of Monterey.

QUESTION. What was the first mission board to undertake work in Mexico?

Answer. The American Baptist Home Mission Society appointed Rev. Thomas M. Westrup as its first missionary in 1870, and has been carrying on work continuously since that date.

QUESTION. What has been the progress of the work?

Answer. Most gratifying. From the small beginning in Monterey the work spread into no less than twenty-one other States, the Foreign Mission Board of the Southern Baptist Convention sharing with the American Baptist Home Mission Society the responsibility of caring for so vast a field. To-day there are no less than seventy-five Baptist churches, with a combined membership of nearly 4,000. There are over 2,500 children in Sunday School and 1,500 children being educated in our Baptist mission schools.

QUESTION. What more can you tell us about our mission schools in Mexico?

Answer. The schools in Mexico, in the fields occupied by the missionaries of the Northern Baptist Convention, are sustained by the Woman's American Baptist Home Mission Society as follows:

	Children Enrolled
Monterey	280
Mexico City	175
Guadaloupe	40
Puebla	336
Puebla (San Antonio Mission)	226

This makes a total of 1,057 children in these five schools. The Woman's Society employs a teaching force of twenty-one, and sufficient tuition is received at these various schools to employ no less than six other helpers in the lower classes.

QUESTION. How has the war in Mexico affected our work?

Answer. It has been necessary several times to remove our American workers and their families to places of safety during the periods of pronounced disturbance, but fortunately the missionary work itself has suffered but little. In fact, on some fields the work has grown to such proportions that we can no longer accommodate the crowds that are anxious to hear the gospel preached. This is particularly true in Mexico City, San Luis Potosí, Tampico and Puebla. In Mexico City, under the vigorous leadership of Rev. A. B. De Roos, a converted Jew from Holland, who has had a remarkable career as an evangelist in Central America, the church has received no less than 200 new members since January, 1916, all of them from the better class of people, such as teachers, merchants, clerks, bookkeepers and government employees. Mr. De Roos is preaching the gospel to about 1,000 each Sunday. We have over 450 children in our five Sunday Schools in Mexico City.

QUESTION. What else can you tell us about the most interesting fields?

Answer. The majority of our churches are in the northeastern part of Mexico, in the States of Nuevo León and Tamaulipas. In these two States we have seventeen churches and nine outstations.

QUESTION. In what other States does The American Baptist Home Mission Society have its work established?

Answer. In San Luis Potosí, Aguascalientes, Mexico, Federal District, Morelos, Puebla and Oaxaca. In all of these we have work in the capital cities and itinerate from those centers to the surrounding territory.

QUESTION. Give a summary of the work of the Home Mission Society for the past year (1916).

Answer. Present number of churches, 24; number of outstations, 26; number of English-speaking missionaries, 4; number of Spanish-speaking and native missionaries, 22; number of baptisms during the year, 186; present membership in churches, 1,428; contribution for all work (estimated), United States currency, $2,500; present number of chapels, 11; present number of Sunday Schools, 40; number of pupils enrolled, 1,450. In years gone by the Foreign Board of the Southern Baptist Convention established a denominational printing house in Leon. The Home Mission Society at about the same time established a theological school at Monterey. Recently both boards entered into a co-operative agreement with relation to both of these institutions. This makes unnecessary a duplication in our Baptist work in Mexico. All the Baptist churches of Mexico have formed a National Baptist Convention, which meets annually.

This, together with a magnificent water-supply system, bringing the pure and abundant streams of Xhochimilco (So-che-míl-co) into the capital city, has wrought wonders in bettering health conditions and freed the whole regions surrounding from the plagues which formerly made Mexico City a center of disease and death. Mexico is covered with a network of railways, with a total mileage of 15,000. There are 45,000 miles of telegraph lines and over 3,000 postoffices. Mexico has numerous places of interest for travelers; a great variety of climates, ranging from the heat of the tropical jungles on both coasts to the chilly blasts of zero weather on the mountain tops. For beauty of scenery she cannot be surpassed by any country in the world.

QUESTION. Can you tell us something about the population of Mexico?

Answer. The census of 1910, the last taken, gave Mexico a population of 16,000,000. The races are divided as follows: 39 per cent. are of pure Indian blood, 43 per cent. mixed, or "mestizos," and the remaining 18 per cent. are whites and foreigners. It will be seen at a glance that Mexico is overwhelmingly Indian. Many of the interior tribes still live in their primitive state, preserving to this day the habits, customs and dialects of their forefathers. The middle class, to which reference is made in a foregoing paragraph, is made up largely from the "mestizos," or mixed races. They easily become skilled artisans. They are quick to learn the better way to do things, especially when they learn how well it pays. The pure-blooded Indian, on the other hand, is steadier and more dependable. He will do more work through longer hours for less pay than his brother, through whose veins there flows some foreign blood. The largest city in the republic is the capital, Mexico City, with a population of about 500,000. Next to Mexico City comes Puebla, with 125,000; then follows Guadalajara (Wadal-a-háh-ra) with 110,000. The remaining cities in their order are as follows: Monterey, 75,000; León, 70,000; San Luis Potosí, 60,000; Merida, 60,000; Oaxaca, 45,000; Chihuahua, 38,000; Aguascalientes, 35,000; Queretaro, 35,000; Saltillo, 30,000; Torreón, 35,000; Toluca, 35,000; Tampico, 30,000, and several other cities of importance.

QUESTION. What are the present-day conditions?

Answer. Owing to the long-continued civil strife, the masses of people are reduced to penury and suffering. Business and industry of all kinds have been hard hit by the revolution. Mines and factories, railroads, agriculture and enterprises of various kinds have found it necessary to suspend operations. The rich people have either lost all they had or they have been driven into exile. It is thought by close students of the Mexican problems that if peace and security were assured it would not take Mexico very long to regain her former prosperity. It is a country of vast natural resources, as yet but partially developed, and a few years of peace will work wonders in effacing the ugly scars made by the war. The people of Mexico are by nature kind, polite and hospitable. Education and moral stamina, which only the gospel of Christ can supply, will be the leavening influence to lift them to a higher plane. More Bibles and less bullets is Mexico's crying need.

QUESTION. What about education and public morals in Mexico?

Answer. Unfortunately the rate of illiteracy in Mexico is very high. About 70 per cent. of its inhabitants can neither read nor write. This is due in a large measure to the dominant ecclesiastical system which has always kept the masses of people in ignorance, denying to the poor even the rudiments of an education. The Roman Catholic church is bitterly opposed to lay education, and denies to the State the right to have a public-school system unless the same is placed in the hands of priests and nuns. In spite of this opposition many liberal-minded statesmen in Mexico, aided by the growing Protestant sentiment throughout the country, have encouraged the establishment of public schools, and in the larger centers of population there are many well-equipped schools. However, in the rural districts, where 90 per cent. of Mexico's population reside, very little has been done toward the education of the children. Moral standards are low. Open gambling is permitted. Until recently lotteries in almost every State absorbed about 20 per cent. of the wages of the poor. Sunday is the great day of sport. Everything in the way of diversion and amusement is reserved for Sunday. Bull fights, with all their demoralizing tendencies, are weekly occurrences, although it should be stated that a recent decree published by the *de facto* government forbids bull fights throughout the republic. This decree is only transitory, and not until national legislation is enacted can it be said that bull fighting has been abolished.

QUESTION. What other outstanding feature can you mention?

Answer. Our medical missions. A few years ago we had nothing of the kind in Mexico. A volunteer medical missionary, Dr. C. E. Conwell, offered his services to the Home Mission Society as an experiment. His work grew from the start. Scores have been brought into the church in Mexico City as a direct outcome of Dr. Conwell's work. He has treated no less than 5,000 patients in a single year, and all this without adequate equipment or hospital. Three years ago, through the munificence of a Baptist layman in Connecticut, money was provided for a hospital. By the providence of God and the aid of many interested friends we have at last secured a splendid plant in the city of Puebla, which is now altered to adapt it for hospital purposes, and have equipped it with as complete and perfect equipment as could be secured. This plant will be ready for inauguration as soon as the troubled conditions subside. In this hospital we have room for about seventy-five patients. We also have a chapel where religious services will be held each morning for the poor and helpless, and where medicines will be given both for the soul and for the body.

QUESTION. What is the immediate duty of American Baptists?

Answer. To recognize that Mexico is our neighbor and that she now stands in dire need of our help. Europe cannot help Mexico; South America has serious problems of her own. Help such as Mexico needs can and must come from this side of the Rio Grande. Some may turn away, like Cain of old, and ask: "Am I my brother's keeper?" but the Lord makes immediate answer and says: "Yea, verily." We must help save Mexico. We took from her a large part of her territory, paying but a pittance in comparison with its worth; shall we not freely give her spiritual blessings? Mexico has thrown off the Spanish yoke; she is now trying hard to throw off the Roman yoke; and shall we not assist her to secure her emancipation? The day of Mexico's awakening is at hand. Out of the confusion which has prevailed for six years a new and better Mexico will result. One thing is sure: The need for more missionaries, more mission schools, more Bibles and Testaments, more chapels and churches, more hospitals and other agencies for the redemption of our afflicted sister republic was never more urgent than now, and American Baptists should not and will not be slow to do their full share in meeting that need.

NEW BAPTIST HOSPITAL, PUEBLA, MEXICO

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